

# MAHATMA GANDHI

## AND OTHER MARTYRS OF INDIA

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With an introduction by R R Diwakar, Mahatma Gandhi's  
close disciple, and a glowing tribute to Gandhi  
by his successor, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister of India

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THE ARCHITECT OF INDIAN FREEDOM



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My grateful thanks are due to our revered leader, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, for having done the honor of permitting me to use his article on Gandhiji in this booklet

Sjt R R Diwakar, the great Karnataka leader, member of the Indian Constituent Assembly, and one of the closest disciples of Mahatma Gandhi and an authority on Gandhiji's technique of *Satyagraha*, has been kind enough to write an introduction and has laid me in deep debt of gratitude

I take this opportunity of thanking all my friends who have helped me in various capacities, and specially to Mr Carl A Leach for undertaking this publication

Mahatma Gandhi is dead, but what Gandhiji taught and stood for will live as long as humanity exists. There is no other alternative to maintain PEACE in this world but to accept his doctrines of TRUTH and NON VIOLENCE.

May 15, 1948  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, Missouri

Nadig Krishna Murthy

## INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure and with some pride that I am writing these few lines to usher in this small booklet by my young friend, Nadig Krishna Murthy. He has been a devout follower of Gandhiji and what he writes is out of clear understanding and real appreciation of "the moral genius" that is no longer amongst us. Gandhiji was unique not merely in standing up for truth at any cost but for evolving a technique of organizing the forces of non violence for fighting evil in all forms and on all fronts. In this, he is unique beyond measure.

Non violence or the law of love has not been the monopoly of any one religion or race. It has been emphasized by all religions and by all saints. But where Gandhiji goes beyond all others including Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity and Buddhism, is in refusing to compromise with violence *under any circumstances* and in finding out a method of non violent resistance to evil under all circumstances, not only by individuals but by groups and nations.

That method is *Satyagraha*.

The value of a thing is realized the more when it is lost. The absence of Gandhiji is felt at almost every step and it is growing on us. "Oh! If he were there!" is the expression that escapes our lips involuntarily.

And how much more was he to us, who have followed him through thick and thin for the last thirty years! It is such a personal loss. One could take to him any problem, personal or public, and speak to him as to one's conscience, get the doubts cleared and march on.

form of evil and ceaseless service of humanity through love is his message to us Long live Bapu

Many books have been written by competent authors on Gandhiji and his way of life Many more would be written This small booklet, however, is not superfluous in so far as it seeks humbly to reflect the opinions and personal reminiscences of a close disciple of the Great Guru It has a personal touch all its own and is sure to be helpful to the readers in interpreting Gandhiji

The young author is very fortunate in getting permission to use an article on Bapu by such a distinguished disciple as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for his simple literary attempt It certainly adds to the value of the booklet and I am sure it would further the cause for which the author stands

R R. DIWAKAR

DISCIPLE

LEADER

AUTHOR



—Photo by R S Rao

*Ranganatha Ramachandra Diwakar*

*Satyagraha based on truth and non violence is the only method*

## THE PERFECT ARTIST

Nineteen sixteen Over 32 yeears ago That was when I first saw Bapu, and an age has gone by since then Inevitably one looks back and memories crowd in What a strange period this has been in India's history and the story, with all its ups and downs and triumphs and defeats, has the quality of a ballad and a romance Even our trival lives were touched by a halo of romance, because we lived through this period and were actors, in greater or lesser degree, in the great drama of India

This period has been full of wars and upheavals and stirring events all over the world Yet events in India stand out in distinctive outline because they were on an entirely different plane If a person studied this period without knowing much of Bapu, he would wonder how and why all this happened in India It is difficult to explain it, it is even difficult to understand by the cold light of reason why each one of us behaved as he or she did It sometimes happens that an individual or even a nation is swept away by some gust of emotion or feeling into a particular type of action, sometimes noble action more often ignoble action But that passion and feeling pass and the individual soon returns to his normal levels of action and inaction

The surprising thing about India during this period was not only that the country as a whole functioned on a high plane, but also that it functioned more or less continuously for a lengthy period on that plane That, indeed was a remarkable achievement It cannot easily be explained or understood unless one looks upon the astonishing personality that moulded this period Like a colossus he stands astride half a century of India's history a colossus not of the body but of the mind and spirit.

### *We Feel Orphaned*

We mourn for Bapu and feel orphaned Looking back at his magnificent life, what is there to mourn for? Surely to very very few human beings in history could it have been given to find so much fulfilment in their own lives He was



sad for our failures and unhappy at not having raised India to greater heights. That sadness and unhappiness are easy to understand. Yet who dares say that his life was a failure? Whatever he touched he turned into something worthwhile and precious. Whatever he did yielded substantial results, though perhaps not as great as he hoped for. One carried away the impression that he could not really fail in any thing that he attempted. According to the teachings of the *Gita*, he laboured dispassionately without attachment to results and so results came to him.

During his long life full of hard work and activity and novel adventures out of the common rut, there is hardly any jarring note anywhere. All his manifold activities became progressively a symphony and every word he spoke and every gesture that he made fitted into this, and so unconsciously he became the perfect artist for he had learnt the art of living, though the way of life he had adopted was very different from the world's way. It became apparent that the pursuit of truth and goodness leads among other things to this artistry in life.

*As he grew older his body seemed to be just a vehicle for the mighty spirit within him. Almost one forgot the body as one listened to him or looked at him, and so where he sat became a temple and where he trod was hallowed ground.*

### *Died A Martyr*

Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived. Indeed, it heightened the lesson of his life. He died in the fullness of his powers and as he would no doubt, have liked to die at the moment of prayer. He died a martyr to the cause of unity to which he had always been devoted and for which he had worked unceasingly, more specially during the past year or more. He died suddenly as all men should wish to die. There was no fading away of the body or a long illness or the forgetfulness of the mind that comes with age. Why then should we grieve for him? Our memories of him will be of the Master, whose step was light to the end, whose smile was infectious and whose eyes were full of laughter. We shall associate no failing powers with him of body or mind. He lived and he died at the top of his strength and powers, leaving a picture in our minds.

# PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA



—Courtesy of Indian Embassy Washington D C

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Bapu came to enrich us and make us strong      We will march on

and in the mind of the age that we live in that can never fade away

The picture will not fade But he did something much more than that for he entered into the very stuff of our minds and spirits and changed them and moulded them The Gandhi generation will pass away, but that stuff will remain and will affect each succeeding generation, for it has become a part of India's spirit Just when we were growing poor in spirit in this country, Bapu came to enrich us and make us strong, and the strength he gave us was not for a moment or a day or a year but it was something added on to our national inheritance

Bapu has done a giant's work for India and the world and even for our poor selves, and he has done it astonishingly well And now it is our turn not to fail him or his memory but to carry on the work to the best of our ability and to fulfill the pledges we have so often taken —*Harijan*

—PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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## PART I

### INDIA OF MY DREAMS

*I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. This is the India of my dreams.*

*Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*

*DEDICATED TO*  
*All Fighters for Freedom*  
*Through*  
*Truth and Non-violence.*

## MAHATMA GANDHI

*"All self abandon ye who enter here,  
Performing action without attachment, man shall attain the  
Supreme" (Gita 111 19)*

*"Do not entrust this treasure to him who is without sacrifice,  
without devotion, without the desire for this teaching and who  
denies Me On the other hand, those who will give this precious  
treasure to My devotees will, by the fact of this service  
assuredly reach Me And those who, being free from malice,  
will with faith absorb this teaching, shall having attained free  
dom, live where people of true merit go after death*

*"Action alone is thy province, never the fruits thereof, let  
not thy motive be the fruit of action, nor shouldst thou desire  
to avoid action" (Gita 11 47)*

—Bhagavad Gita

*"Whosoever surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing  
good, he verily hath grasped the firm handhold Unto Allah  
belongeth the sequel of all things*

*"My uage is the concern of Allah only," and "it becometh  
not a believing man or believing woman, when Allah has de  
cided an affair for them, that they should claim any say in  
the affair"*

—Koran

*"Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a  
tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, Resist not him that is  
evil but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to  
him the other also And if any man would go to law with  
thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also And  
whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two  
Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow  
of thee turn not away*

*Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor,  
and hate thine enemy but I say unto you Love your enemies,  
and pray for them that persecute you" (Matthew 5 38 44)*

—Bible

*"There should be no selfish purpose behind our actions. And to be detached from the fruits of actions is not to be ignorant of them or to disregard or disown. To be detached is never to abandon action, because the contemplated may not follow. On the contrary, it is proof of the immovable faith in the certainty of the contemplated result following in due course."*

*—Mahatma Gandhi*

**"A LEADER** of his people, unsupported by any outward authority; a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior.

"Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

Albert Einstein, the world famous scientist, thus wrote in a glowing tribute to the Mahatma. The Mahatma's great journey has come to an end. The cruel hand of the assassin has taken away the precious treasure that the world possessed in Gandhiji. Never in history has such tragic news come since the atomic bomb outrage on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The whole world was stunned to hear of the unhappy end of Mahatma Gandhi. Humanity has lost its strongest exponent of truth and non violence, peace and brotherhood in Gandhiji. The light of Asia has been extinguished. India has become an orphan. This most appalling tragedy in the darkest hour of India's history will be remembered by generations to come. The world could not afford to lose its greatest man of love and peace who substituted truth and non-violence as an alternative to the atomic bomb and war.

After all that is said about Gandhiji, one thought comes to



mind Why was Gandhiji killed? George Bernard Shaw, the famous English playwright in tribute to Gandhiji said "It shows how dangerous it is to be too good"

Soon after the radio announced the death of Gandhiji, I was having a melancholy stroll, remembering my own associations with the Mahatma An American student met me on the road He stopped to console me In the course of our talk he said, "Gandhi was a wonderful man His teachings were applicable to the whole world He was a man of universal love and peace The whole world thought he was good Why was he killed?"

I was benumbed I did not speak I could not I hung my head with sorrow and shame He continued "I guess they killed him for the same reason they did Jesus Christ" He uttered the truth In a faltering voice, I said, "Mankind has lost its sweetness"

With overwhelming grief, after a lifetime association with him and his mission, the Indian ambassador to Washington, Asaf Ali, said "The spirit of Gandhi is immortal and shall continue to beam upon the dark path of the misguided among mankind His deathless message was for the entire human race and though he has cast off the mortal coil, humanity will continue to draw inspiration for its salvation from his sublime teaching"

Mahatma Gandhi is dead, but his principles of truth and non violence, love and peace, will ever shine and shine almost alone, a star Time will come when the world realizes the great gift and contribution he has made to mankind—non violence and *Satyagraha* (truthful, non violent, passive resistance) As Romain Rolland says, "Mr Gandhi's *Satyagraha* experiment is the sole chance now existing in the world for effecting transformation of humanity without violence If this fails there will remain no other issue in human history but violence This is why all those who have at heart the social harmony and the spirit of peace should help India with all their strength"

## *His Life and Career*

October 2, 1869, saw the birth of one of the noblest and the greatest of men, Mahatma Gandhi, at Porbandur, a small princely state in India. His father, Karamchand Uttamachand Gandhi, was the Dewan (prime-minister) of that state. Gandhiji grew to boyhood under the care of his beloved mother, Putli Bai, who taught him devotion to God from the beginning. Early in his life he read *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata*, the epic mythological stories of India. From these he imbibed the teachings of Rama and Krishna, who became his ideals. At the age of thirteen Gandhiji married an orthodox, lively, beautiful girl named Kastur Bai. She was his true partner in life, and she enjoyed and suffered with her husband. They have four sons: Hir Lal Gandhi, who is doing humanitarian work in Arya Samaj; Manilal Gandhi, who is editing his father's newspaper, "Indian Opinion," in South Africa; Ramadoss Gandhi, who is an employee in an insurance office at Nagpur; and Devadoss Gandhi, editor of the famed "Hindustan Times" of New Delhi. They have an adopted daughter, Lakshmi, who belongs to the untouchable caste.

Mahatma Gandhi was sent to London to study law. His uncle, his elder brother and his teacher supported the move. They all supposed Gandhiji would supplement the income of his family after his Western education. At the age of eighteen, Gandhiji found himself in the midst of Londoners. His fight began then. He had to face the superiority complex of the white people there. He was cautious in all his behavior with these people. He had promised his mother that he would not touch strong drink, meat and women. He kept this promise till the end. He prepared his own vegetarian food in England. He attracted a number of people to his vegetarian philosophy and afterwards he founded the Vegetarian Society, where vegetarian diets were discussed.

Having been called to the bar by the Inner Temple, he sailed to India to establish himself as a lawyer in Bombay.

When Gandhiji landed at the port of Bombay, he heard of the death of his dear mother. It was a great blow to him. She had died earlier, but his people had not informed him, lest he be rendered grief stricken in a foreign land. The unexpected had happened, but Gandhiji took it calmly.

Gandhiji began his practice in the High Court of Bombay. But he was a failure and could not earn his living. So his thoughts turned to his native state. He could rely on his relatives for help in building his profession. With the help of his uncle and brother, he could earn enough to keep him going.

Luck was with him. A great merchant from South Africa asked Gandhiji to undertake a law suit involving a sum of £40,000. It was a great opportunity for him to serve his countrymen in a foreign land. As soon as he arrived in South Africa, he successfully settled the suit giving sound advice, without taking the case to court. He thus became a humanitarian lawyer. He refused to defend cases when he found his client was definitely in the wrong. Soon he became involved in fighting for the rights and the privileges of his countrymen in South Africa. He led the movement against racial discrimination, white superiority, and all injustices done to the Indian community. It is here he, Gandhiji, started his political credo, *Satyagraha*.

After a short visit to India, he went back to South Africa to continue his struggle against the premier, General Smuts. He founded a colony, which he named after Tolstoy, as a laboratory in which to test his truths. South Africa was Gandhiji's political and spiritual laboratory where he put his thoughts in to action and experimented with his truths and beliefs. His wife, children and members of his colony were his instruments. The results he obtained were amazing. In 1914 some of the worst injustices against the community were removed and redressed by the Smuts government.

Mahatmaji returned to India after a successful fight in South Africa. He saw his country in utter poverty, ignorance and political bondage. One of the fiery political leaders of

India, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, died on August 20, 1920, leaving a void in the Indian political field. Gandhiji was on the spot to take his place and lead the country to freedom.

Before taking the responsibility, Gandhiji took the advice of his political *guru*, (teacher) Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a moderate leader of Indian politics and president of the Servants of India Society. With his advice, Gandhiji toured the whole country and studied conditions. Then he founded his first Ashram in Sabarmati, a distance of two miles from Ahmedabad, a city of millionaires and mill owners in the Bombay Province, to carry on his political and spiritual work.

The year 1920 saw Gandhiji's political weapon of *Satyagraha* in action, in the form of the famous non violent, non cooperation movement against the rulers, the British government. He was arrested in 1922 on charges of preaching sedition. Pleading guilty, he said, "If love of freedom is a crime and sedition, I plead guilty to that charge." The presiding judge, Justice Bloomfield shed tears after sentencing Gandhiji to six years of prison life. Before the end of his term he was released from prison due to his poor health.

After his recovery Gandhiji gave most of his attention to the constructive programs of the upliftment of Harijans (untouchables), propagation of Hindu Moslem unity and the adoption of the spinning wheel as a symbol of economic independence. By this time Gandhiji had become the nation's most loved and popular leader. With his moral and spiritual power, he had raised the status of the political struggle to a high degree. The nation always looked to him for guidance.

He started another famous non cooperation movement in 1930. Negotiations with the British government were a failure. There was no possibility of the rulers granting India's request for freedom. To Gandhiji, *Satyagraha* was the last resort.

On April 5, 1930, he started his historic Dandi March, with his trusted followers to break the salt tax laws by preparing salt for the common people in symbolic protest. He was ar

rested on the way and put into prison. In the meanwhile the First Indian Round Table Conference was held in London to devise ways and means of solving the Indian political dead lock. Gandhiji was released in 1931, to allow him to attend the conference. As the sole representative of the Indian people, Gandhiji attended the Round Table Conference.

The conference was a complete failure for there was no agreement even on fundamentals. Gandhiji went with great hopes and faith in the British people but returned empty handed only to continue his interrupted Civil Disobedience Movement. He was again arrested as soon as he landed in Bombay. Then came the infamous communal award of Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald, which separated Hindus and Moslems, by giving separate representation in choosing members of the Legislature which resulted in the further disunity of India.

Gandhiji was perturbed and began one of his major fasts as a protest against the communal electorates. He ended his fast after six days, when the government assured satisfactory agreement.

In 1935, Gandhiji asked his followers to temporarily stop the Civil Disobedience Movement to give a fair trial to newly announced political reforms, for the realization of progressive government in India embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935. Due to certain glaring loopholes in the act, it did not come into force till 1937. However, after an oral promise from the British government that it would not interfere in the internal administration of the popular governments, the Indian National Congress Party contested the elections to the eleven provincial legislatures and came out victorious in seven out of eleven provinces with an overwhelming majority. The Congress Party formed the peoples' government. Later on, two more provinces followed suit and came into the Congress fold.

Differences of opinion arose between the Gandhian leadership and the radical elements in the Indian National Congress

under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose Gandhi's nominee for the leadership of the Congress Party was defeated Gandhi accepted that as his defeat The annual session of the Indian National Congress held at Tripuri, in Central Provinces in 1939, asserted the leadership of Gandhi again and asked Bose to form his cabinet according to the wishes of Gandhi

Gandhi was not present at this session He was in a life and death struggle in a native state, Rajkot, having resorted to a fast unto death to win the heart of the ruler, who had earlier broken the promise of responsible government made to his subjects The viceroy intervened The highest Court of Justice decided that Gandhi was on the right side Gandhi ended his fast and the country was relieved of its greatest worry

The Second World War broke out in 1939 The viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, declared India a belligerent country without consulting the Indian people The popular ministries resigned in protest Gandhi demanded complete independence before India would cooperate with the allies (for its successful prosecution) for the simple reason that the people of India could fight Fascism and Nazism effectively As usual with the British bureaucracy Gandhi was sidetracked

After a warning to the diehard government Gandhi began his Individual Civil Disobedience Movement wherein only picked Satyagrahis could offer non violent moral resistance against Indians participating in the war Vinobha Bhave his closest follower was the first Satyagrahi and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was the second This movement was directed against the British rulers to convert them to India's just cause Gandhi never intended to harm the allied cause His only intention was to bring moral pressure on the British He succeeded

Events in the Eastern war theatre were rapid and dangerous There was the threat of Japanese invasion of India The British realized the danger of their policy All Gandhi's

prisoners were released unconditionally Sir Stafford Cripps was sent as the sole representative of the British government to negotiate with the Indian people Cripps came to India to do what Churchill had told him to do Neither the Congress nor the Moslem League Party of Jinnah could agree to his proposals Cripps returned to London by the same chartered plane The negotiations were a failure, not because of Sir Stafford, but because of the diehard, Churchill

The struggle for Indian Independence reached a culmination in 1942 The August Revolution, as it is called, has no parallel in Indian history Gandhiji, having been convinced that the British were not sincere and honest in their intentions of giving freedom to India, started the historic "Quit India" movement The struggle directed the British to quit India immediately irrespective of the differences among Indians, so that they might settle their differences and determine their future according to their own pattern

The All India Congress Committee met on August 9, 1942, and ratified in a resolution Gandhiji's idea that the British quit India Gandhiji asked all Indians to declare themselves free and independent and to act as citizens of a free India He gave the slogan, "Do or Die," in the event of government opposition Gandhiji had made it clear that the struggle had to go on non violently and truthfully

The British government tried to suppress the movement with bayonets, rifles, bombs and machine guns The freedom loving Indians faced all this brutal force with love and non violent resistance The nation's trusted leaders, including Gandhiji, Nehru, Azad and Patel, were arrested and put in prison Gandhiji, along with his wife and secretaries, was imprisoned in a palatial building owned by the Aga Khan in Poona, near Bombay

Confusion prevailed throughout the country People were left without the guidance of their leaders In order to suppress the people the government began violence in a terrible manner Some answered the government with counter viol

ence Gandhi had to sustain one of his greatest losses in the Aga Khan palace. It was the death of his life long secretary, Mahadev Desai. To Gandhi, Mahadev was like Boswell to Johnson. In Mahadev, India lost a great authority on Gandhism, who could have written authentic and valuable literature on Gandhi and all that Gandhi stood for.

Correspondence was going on between the viceroy and Gandhi on the responsibility of acts of violence by the Congress Party as alleged by the British controlled Indian government. Gandhi repudiated the charges made by the viceroy. As a protest against the viceroy's repeated declarations on the responsibility for violence, Gandhi began his historic fast of twenty one days to establish the truth, appealing to God to judge him and the government.

This fast attracted the attention of the world. World thinkers and politicians were startled by the effects of Gandhi's fast. The viceroy refused to withdraw the charges, but released Gandhi fearing that he would die. Gandhi refused to come out of the prison unless the insinuating charges were withdrawn. The great ordeal of the Mahatma continued. On the sixteenth day of his fast, Gandhi's condition was grave. He was on his death bed next day when a miracle happened. God came to the rescue of justice. He decided that the Mahatma was on the right side. Gandhi successfully underwent the ordeal for twenty one days and came out victorious. Gandhi won a moral victory over the viceroy. Instead of a change of heart in the attitude of the British government there was a change of viceroy. Lord Linlithgow was replaced by Lord Wavell.

Gandhi sustained one of the greatest blows of his life in the death of his wife, Kastur Bai. She had been his life long friend and companion both in joys and sorrows for sixty three years. The nation was plunged into sorrow when she died on February 22, 1943. Gandhi was plying his *Charaka* (spinning wheel) in an adjoining room when news of the death of his wife was brought to him. He was calm and



serene With a voice full of love, affliction, respect and devotion, Gandhiji uttered, "Ba chali gaye, Achaha!" ("Did Ba pass away?") To Gandhiji, death was nothing but the passing away of the physical body He always remembered Ba for guidance and cooperation throughout their life long association She was partly responsible for the successful experimentation of his doctrine of truth and non violence

The Indian political deadlock was broken temporarily by Viceroy Wavell by releasing Gandhiji from prison on May 6, 1944 Gandhiji had been in very bad health His condition became worse A few days more in the prison would have proved fatal Wavell was intelligent enough to sense the feeling of the people and to value the doctors' report of Gandhiji's health Hence, he released Gandhiji for more than one reason

Gandhiji however, regained his health and immediately got to work to settle the stalemate He met Jinnah eighteen times in Bombay to come to an agreement with him on the most complicated and important problem of Hindu Moslem cooperation Moslem League leader Jinnah was adamant He could not be reconciled to the idea of one united nation He demanded the partition of India Gandhiji could not agree to the principle of carving India into two parts So the Gandhiji Jinnah negotiations were a failure Deadlock continued The British government made another attempt at solving the political stalemate in 1945 By that time the war was over They released the members of the Congress Working Committee including Nehru, Azad and Patel

Leaders of all political parties met at Simla, the summer capitol of India, to consider the new plan of Viceroy Wavell, which granted Dominion status to India, reconstructing the viceroy's cabinet with all Indians on a Hindu Moslem parity basis The Congress could not accept the proposal as it was tantamount to rejection of its basic national aspiration

The government in Great Britain changed C R Atlee became Britain's Labor prime minister, replacing the diehard

*Conservative war time prime minister, Winston Churchill*

As a true lover of freedom he announced in Parliament that India would be given complete Independence by June, 1948. The whole world received this historic news with great acclamation. He immediately sent three of his top cabinet ministers to work out a plan of transferring power to India smoothly and gradually. From the beginning Gandhiji believed in faith. After close examination of the plan, Gandhiji asked the Congress Party to give it a trial. Gandhiji was certain that Britain would not go back on her promises this time. There were many reasons, the chief one was that the British could no longer resist the Indian desire for freedom.

The Congress Party accepted the plan with some reservations. Jinnah's Moslem League refused to cooperate with the Congress, thus blocking any progress. An interim government was formed under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. After some futile efforts to impede the political progress, Jinnah's party members skulked into the Nehru cabinet through a back door. But they were not sincere in their co-operation for they continued to oppose the work of the Indian Constituent Assembly which was formed to draw up the new constitution under the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Astute politician, cunning diplomat, Jinnah stuck steadfastly to his guns. Gandhiji continued to preach Hindu Moslem unity. With the knowledge of Jinnah, wide communal riots were planned. His Communal Party took active part in the mass killings of Hindus in Calcutta on August 16, 1946. The tragedy continued in Naokhali and Lahore. Gandhiji could not sit in his Sewagram Ashram plying the spinning wheel. Hindu Moslem unity was one of the problems which was near and dear to his heart. Hindus and Moslems had been living happily like brothers. The incessant preaching of hatred and enmity by the Moslem League made them succumb to a lack of faith and disbelief in each other. At the age of 77, Mahatma Gandhi started on foot to the riot ridden areas of Naokhali and Calcutta, preaching Hindu Moslem unity,

peace, love and brotherhood His Naokhali tour had a tremendous effect on the general relations of Hindus and Moslems Moslems who did not believe him began to praise him and overnight became his staunch disciples

If only Lord Wavell had given a helping hand to the Nehru cabinet in curbing the communal disease, today India would not have been divided at all Wavell's divide and rule policy enhanced the dissensions between Hindus and Moslems Jinnah was definitely the gainer Deadlock persisted Lord Wavell was called back by the Labor Government Lord Louis Mountbatten took his place and became the twenty eighth and the last of India's Viceroys

As soon as Mountbatten assumed the viceroyalty, he wrote a letter requesting Gandhiji to come and meet him in New Delhi to discuss the future of India Mountbatten had his partition plan ready Gandhiji was not in favor of his plan He was strongly against the division of India He told Mountbatten that he could not agree to any plan for the partitioning of India He insisted that India should not be divided under any conditions He became firmer in his insistence of the British withdrawing from India on the promised date, leaving the fate of India in the hands of its trusted leaders

Mountbatten met the Congress president, Acharya Kripalani, Nehru, Azad, Patel Baladev Singh, and Jinnah He persuaded the Congress leaders to his plan of dividing India into two dominions of India and Pakistan The Congress Party with great reluctance accepted his June 3 plan Gandhiji came out openly denouncing the plan for it was definitely dividing India, but he did not hamper the progress of the plan As the nation's accepted leaders had already agreed to the plan, he asked the people to follow their leaders

August 15 1947, saw the birth of a new and independent India, but an India divided into parts, which distressed Gandhiji very much When the new capitals of New Delhi and Karachi were celebrating with pomp and pleasure their newly won independence, on that day Gandhiji was fasting and pray

ing God for the Hindu Moslem unity and the reunion of India and Pakistan

Independence to India and Pakistan did not bring happiness to millions of Hindus and Moslems and Sikhs who indulged in mass migrations because of fear, mistrust, disbelief, and misunderstanding. Mass migrations from both India and Pakistan took place. Moslems killed Hindus, and Sikhs. In turn, Hindus killed Moslems. The vicious circle went on. These senseless killings distressed Gandhiji. At the time he was in Calcutta working for peace. Fresh riots in the city forced him to start another fast to win his co religionists from savagery. He announced that he would end his fast when Calcutta returned to sanity. Independent India was shocked to hear the news of Mahatma's fast. People prayed God to save his life. Hindus and Moslems realized their mistake. They thronged in thousands and came in a procession to request Gandhiji to break the fast for they had become brothers again. The riots in Calcutta stopped. Gandhiji broke his fast.

After his triumph in Calcutta, he wanted to go to Punjab where a heavy toll of life and property had been taken. On his way to Lahore, he stopped in New Delhi. Communal disturbances had started in New Delhi itself, so Gandhiji thought of staying in New Delhi to work for peace there. Day and night, the 78 year old Mahatma worked for Hindu Moslem unity. He visited the Hindu and Moslem refugees. He heard their tales of woe and misery and gave them his good advice. He became the universal father of the nation.

In the meantime, the relations between India and Pakistan had become very bad, because of the problems of Junagadh and Kashmir States. There was trouble over financial agreements, too. It seemed as if war had become inevitable between India and Pakistan. Matters had reached an explosive point in Kashmir, which had earlier acceded to the Indian dominion. Tribesmen from the frontier, Pakistan disguised troops and reactionary forces, invaded Kashmir, killing Moslem and Hindu men and women, and destroying their property. Gandhiji

was disturbed. The India government sent military help to resist the invaders. Gandhiji emphatically said that the evil in Kashmir should be suppressed to protect the honor of Kashmir and India. Though there was no official declaration of war between India and Pakistan, it was going on in Kashmir, the Pakistan troops directly aiding the raiders to destroy Kashmir.

In spite of Gandhiji's supreme efforts to bring amity between Hindus and Moslems, there was no change of heart among them. So Gandhiji began his last fast to achieve greater unity between Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs, on January 12, 1948. The country was whipped to its senses. Prayers for Gandhiji's life and for Hindu Moslem unity were made in temples, mosques and churches. Indians, irrespective of caste, creed or community, with one voice came to Gandhiji. They requested Gandhiji to end the fast.

The Indian government, as a goodwill gesture of peace towards Hindu Moslem unity, released the finances which they were withholding. The nation's leaders signed a pledge that they would work for unity. Gandhiji's seven conditions giving more concessions to Moslems in India were accepted by the leaders as well as the Indian government. Gandhiji broke his fast on January 18, 1948, after being satisfied about his mission. The country was relieved that Gandhiji was alive and prayed God to give the full span of 125 years of life to the Mahatma.

A small section of the Hindu extremist party members did not agree with Gandhiji. They believed in the full extinction of the Moslem community. Any concessions to Moslems irritated them. They were of the opinion that the Moslems were invaders of India and had no right to live in India as a separate nation. They opposed Gandhiji's peace proposals. They became angry when they heard that Gandhiji had again won laurels by achieving Hindu Moslem unity.

The misguided extremists lost their senses and evolved a plot to kill Gandhiji, the father of the nation. Gandhiji had

done more for the Hindu religion, which the extremists wanted to save, than any individual in India for generations. But they were incensed and a country-made bomb was thrown at Gandhiji on January 22, 1948, just four days after the termination of his fast. Luckily for the nation, the bomb fell 150 feet from Gandhiji where he was quietly praying. The bomb explosion did not perturb Gandhiji at all. He continued with his congregation as if nothing had happened.

The conspirator was caught. Next day Gandhiji forgave the bomb thrower and appealed to the police not to take any action against him. He prayed God to change the heart of the misguided youth. After this incident, protection was offered to Gandhiji. He refused all offered protection, saying that his life was in the hands of God, and that nobody could save him from death if God wanted it. Gandhiji continued his prayer meetings on the open grounds of the Birla House, (Birla House is a palatial building of Ghana Shyama Doss Birla, India's multi-millionaire) where anybody could attend and see Gandhiji at a distance of five feet.

It was one of the darkest days in the history of the world. The Eastern hemisphere had finished its day's work. The Western hemisphere was just on the brink of rising. Friday, January 30, 1948, had arrived. The extremist plotters took advantage of the weaker side of Gandhiji's protection. They chose this day for their cruel deed.

The clock had struck 5.35. Gandhiji was unusually late for the prayer meeting. He had to answer some important letters that day. It seemed as if Gandhiji had some premonition of his death. He called his secretary and said that he would like to answer all his important letters lest the next day would never come. He was coming with his granddaughter to the prayer meeting place. He met a young man of thirty years clad in military uniform. The young man bowed before Gandhiji with folded hands. Acknowledging his greetings, Gandhiji came and stood on the platform. The young man who had earlier greeted Gandhiji on his way to the prayer ground was

in front of Gandhiji near the dias. He had hidden a small revolver when he greeted Gandhiji with folded hands. The dark hour had come. The young man's salutation with folded hands had a tragic meaning.

Gandhiji greeted his devotees with his usual smile. Folding his hands, he began to settle for the prayer. The mad man pulled the trigger of the revolver. A sharp crack was heard. The bullet had already pierced through Mahatma's body. The assassin shot him again, and again. Who ever had dreamed of such a thing! By the time the gathering realized what was happening Gandhiji had been shot three times.

The frail body of the Mahatma fell to the ground. Falling he made signs of forgiveness to the assassin, pointing his fingers towards him. He uttered last words, "Oh! Ram! Oh! Ram!!" (Oh! God). He was taken inside a house immediately. Doctors rushed there. He asked for water and sank into unconsciousness. Nehru and Patel hurried to the spot. Gandhiji looked at them and in his fading smile were the hopes of the future. He closed his eyes, ever brightening eyes, forever. His granddaughter, Manu Gandhi, on whose lap Gandhiji was lying, announced to the world, "Bapu is dead." The light of the world had gone out.

Sgt Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi's personal secretary for many years, pathetically describes the tragic incident of Gandhiji's assassination in the columns of *Harijan*. The description is so moving that one could not but shed tears.

Pyarelal writes

### *His Last Meal*

At 4.30 p.m. Abha brought the evening meal, his last meal on earth, which was practically the same as the morning one. The last meeting was with the Sardar.

In the forenoon when Abha had brought him raw carrot juice he had twitted her saying "So you are serving me cattle fare." "Ba used to call it horse fare," she had replied. "Is it not grand of me," he rejoined, "to relish what no one else would care for," and laughed.

"Bapu, your watch must be feeling very neglected. You would not look at it," remarked Abha. "Why should I, since you are my timekeepers," he retorted. "But you do not look at the time keepers," rejoined one of them. Bapu again laughed. The last remark he uttered as he cleared the footsteps was, "I am late by ten minutes. I hate being late. I like to be at the place of prayer exactly at the stroke of five." Here the conversation stopped, there being a tacit compact with the "sticks" that all jokes and conversation must cease—nothing but thoughts of prayer must fill the mind—as soon as the precincts of the prayer ground were reached.

### *The Cruel Shots*

As he passed through the cordoned lane through the prayer congregation, he took his hands off the shoulders of the two girls to answer the *namaskars* of the prayer congregation. All of a sudden someone from the crowd roughly elbowed his way into the cordon from the right. Little Manu thinking that he was coming forward to touch his feet, remonstrated saying something about it being already late for the prayer and tried to stop the intruder by holding his hand. He violently jerked her off, causing the "Ashram Bhajanawali" and Bapu's spittoon and "mala" which she was carrying in her hands to fall down. As she stopped down to pick up the scattered things, he planted himself in front of Bapu at less than point blank range—so close, indeed, that one of the ejected shells was afterwards found caught among the folds of Bapu's clothes. Three shots rang out in quick succession from the seven chambered automatic pistol, the first shot entering the abdomen on the right side two and a half inches above the umbilicus and three and a half inches to the right of the mid line, the second penetrating the seventh intercostal space one inch to the right of the mid line and the third on the right side of the chest one inch above the nipple and four inches from the mid line. The first and the second shots passed right through and came out at the back. The third remained embedded in the lung. At the first shot the foot that was in motion, when he was hit, came down. He still stood on his legs when the second shot rang out and then collapsed. The last words he uttered were "Kama Rama." The face turned ashen grey. A spreading crimson spot appeared on the white clothes. The hands which had been raised in *namaskar* to the gathering slowly came down, one arm falling in its natural place on Abha's neck. The limp body



softly sank down. Then only did dazed Manu and Abha realize what had happened.

I had just returned from the city where I had gone to complete my preparations for departure to Noakhali on the next day. I had hardly reached the avenue of stone arches that lead to the prayer ground when Shri Chandwani came running from the opposite direction. "Telephone for a doctor," he shouted. "Bapu has been shot." I stood petrified as in a nightmare. Mechanically I got someone to ring up the doctor.

### *Death Instantaneous*

Everybody felt staggered. Dr Raj Sabharwal who came behind him, placed his head gently on her lap as the quivering body lay prone before her, eyes half shut. The assassin was grappled by a Birla House man. Others joined and overpowered the miscreant after a short scuffle. The still, limp body was carried inside by friends and laid on the mattress where he used to sit and work. But before anything could be done, the clock had ceased to tick. A teaspoonful of honey and hot water that was administered after he was brought in, was hardly swallowed. Death had been almost instantaneous.

Dr Sushila was away at Bahawalpur, where Bapu had sent her on a mission of mercy. Dr Bhargava who had been sent for, came and rummaged frantically Dr Sushila's emergency medicine chest for adrenalin. I pleaded with him to save his labours, for Gandhiji had so often charged us not to allow any prohibited drugs to be administered to him even to save his life. As years rolled by, he had tended more and more to rely on "Ramanama" alone as the cure all for himself and for others. Only the other day, during his fast, he had clinched his remarks about the limitations of science by asking, "What else is the meaning of the one sustaining principle on which the creation rests?" To Shree Ghanashyam dasji he had remarked with a sigh speaking of his faith in the all healing power of Ramanama, "If I cannot make it good in my life, it will go down with my death." As it turned out, there was no adrenalin in the emergency chest, the only phial of synthetic adrenalin which Dr Sushila had once procured having been left behind at Kazirkul Camp in Noakhali. He cared so little for it.

## First Arrival

First to arrive from among his colleagues was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He sat down by his side, felt the pulse and fancied it was still beating feebly. Dr. Jivraj Mehta came a few minutes later, examined the pulse and the eye reflexes and ruefully shook his head. The girls burst into sobbing, but presently pulled themselves together and began to chant *Ramanama*. By the side of the lifeless body sat the Sardar with his wan, haggard face set like granite. Next came Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and burying his face among Bapu's clothes began to sob like a child. Shri Devadas and Dr. Rajendra Prasad followed. Then came others—Shri Jairamdas, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Acharya Kripalani—the surviving remnants of the old guard. When Lord Mountbatten arrived a little later, the rush outside had become so great that he was able to get in only with difficulty. The dour warrior that he is, without wasting a moment, he took Panditji and Maulana Azad Sahab aside into another room and began to apply his statesman's mind to the immediate problems arising out of the great tragedy. A suggestion was made for embalming the body and keeping it in state at least for a period. But Gandhi's own views on the matter were so clear and emphatic that it became my imperative and sacred duty to intervene. I told them how uncompromising his opposition had been to making a fetish of the physical body after death. He had more than once told me, "If you let this happen to me, even in death I shall chide you. I want my cremation to take place without any ado wherever I die." Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Shri Jairamdas and Dr. Jivraj Mehta supported my plea and so the idea of embalming was dropped. For the rest of the night the sweet chanting of the *Gita* and Sukhamani Sahab filled the room, while surging, grief-maddened crowds pressed in on all sides of the room for *darshan*. Ultimately the body had to be taken upstairs and placed on a balcony of Birla Bhawan for general view.

In the small hours of the morning the body was bathed according to Hindu rites and then laid down in the middle of the room covered with flowers. Members of the Diplomatic Corps came later in the morning and paid silent homage to him, laying their wreaths at his feet.

"There is nothing I would love more than to meet a shower of bullets with a smile on my face," he had remarked only a

couple of days before the end And God seemed to have granted him the boon

### *Final "Pranams"*

At 11 o'clock the body was placed on the bier, after we had all made our final *pranams* Ramdas Gandhi had by that time arrived from Nagpur by air The last to arrive, just as the bier was about to start, was Dr Sushila, disconsolate at the thought of not being by Bapu's side in his last hour, but thankful that Providence had brought her back not too late for the last *darshan*

"Why this punishment?" she cried again in anguish that night "It is no punishment" Shri Devadas tried to console her "It was a proud privilege to be executing his last mission—the last he was to entrust to anybody" It was characteristic of Bapu He expected more and still more from those whom he had given much

As I gazed at his still, sad face, full of infinite peace and forgiveness and tolerant compassion, the entire vista of 28 long years of the closest, unbroken association from the time when, as a college lad, full of dazzling dreams and undimmed hopes, I had come to him and sat at his feet, flashed across the mind's eye And what crowded years at that!

I pondered over the meaning of what had happened I felt dazed and then slowly the enigma began to resolve itself The other day when he spoke about even one man doing his part fully and well, what did he precisely mean—I had wondered His death has provided the answer Previously when he fasted he asked others to watch and pray "Children must romp and play, while the father is in their midst," he used to say "they will do all the things I am doing when I am gone" His death has pointed the way which many have to tread if the flames that threaten to envelop the country today are to be put out, and the independence which he won for us is to be enjoyed by those for whom it was meant

## MY VISITS WITH BAPU

IT WAS my strong inner desire and urge to see the greatest man of our age that prompted me to go to Bapuji's Ashram (Bapuji is an affectionate name for Gandhiji, meaning "father") I will never forget the day of my visit to Gandhiji's Sewagram Hermitage on March 19, 1941, when I had my first glimpse of the Mahatma Through the kind offices of Dasappaji\* I was able to get into the Ashram

On a hot day in March I walked in the precincts of the Ashram I could not measure the depth of my joy when I was told that Gandhiji was free and would be kind enough to talk to me It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon The Individual Civil Disobedience Movement was going on Pyarelal, one of Gandhiji's secretaries, had been convicted that day Dr Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Kripalani and Dr Pattabhi Sitaramai, the Congress leaders, were there to talk about the movement

I entered the room and bowed to him, touching his feet He greeted me with a smile He inquired about my visit He spoke in Hindustani, our national language I blinked I spoke to him in English with utter shame because I did not know our national language He chided me, saying, "What can you learn here without knowing Hindustani, which is the medium of expression?" I promised him that I would learn the language

Ashram rules are very strict One had to inform the manager before hand of the date of arrival I had not done this in my enthusiasm to see Mahatma So I could not get any food in the Ashram that day Bapuji came to know of this

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\*Dasappaji is now the finance minister to the princely state of Mysore one of the closest disciples of Bapuji who was present at the time of Gandhiji's death and had the unique privilege of offering him his last water

through Ba, his wife. Immediately, he asked Ba to take me for food.

Ba was waiting to take the order of Bapuji. She was present at our interview. She knew that I had had no food the whole day. Earlier, when I was sleeping under a tree waiting for the appointed time to meet the Mahatma, she had come and inquired about me. With motherly affection, she asked, "Why didn't you inform us earlier? Don't you know that we have very strict rules and regulations? Bapu does not spare anybody." Bapuji asked me to come and see him later. Ba dragged me by my arms to the kitchen. She gave me food. I had milk, corn bread, fruits and vegetables. I was overwhelmed with joy by the love she showed me. The food was good. I liked it, and considered it a privilege to have dinner in the Ashram.

Gandhiji started for his evening walks at 6 p.m. Some of his disciples followed him. Anybody could follow him in these walks. At that time, he made it a point to visit his patients. When I was there, he was treating a leper patient, Shastriji. During the walks we had interesting conversations. He used to talk on many general subjects, tell jokes and laugh with his followers and play with young children. I saw more of him this way. I did not miss the walks a single day.

I saw his prayer meetings for the first time. Gandhiji had his prayers both in the morning and evening. His evening prayers were attended by a large gathering. They were conducted on huge open grounds. A bell rang when the prayer hour actually began. The devotees had to maintain complete silence.

Gandhiji started the prayer by reciting 'OM' (God). One of his disciples would then recite some of the hymns from the Bible, Koran and Gita. They were then explained. Some devotional songs would be sung by the Ashram girls. Then Gandhiji would give a speech on the happenings of the day. All of the work of the Ashram for the day would be narrated. Advice would be given wherever necessary. Everybody had

to tell their progress in spinning for the day Gandhi would then retire to his abode. The prayer meeting would end with his departure. I was able to understand what these prayer meetings meant. They brought me a sort of inner peace. They strengthened me. I now pray God whenever I am in joy or distress. He has never failed my expectations.

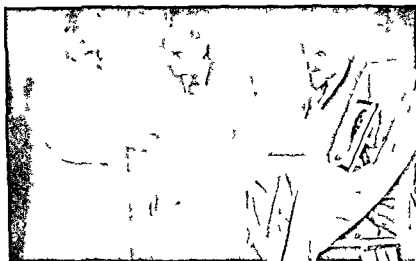
Afterwards I continued my relationship with Gandhi. I again went to his Ashram in 1945 and stayed for fifteen days. I was more and more convinced of the Gandhian practice of simple living and high thinking. I thought I should adopt it as my way of life. I have done it to my satisfaction. I know I am not perfect yet, but I will keep trying.

In 1945 I saw Gandhi with more intimacy. I could utter some conversational Hindustani words. Gandhi knew that I was working with his grandson, Kantilal Gandhi, in pursuit of Gandhian ideals and principles. We had more in common to talk about. He listened intently about our activities, gave me some suggestions, and pointing towards Mysore, said, "Be steadfast in all your actions. Do not shirk from your duties and responsibilities. Let your eyes be always on the aims you have set forth. Be truthful. Do your duty. God will take care of other things. Give Kanti my love. Go and work with him."

It was here I met another close disciple of Gandhi, Ramachandranji (Mr G Ramachandran), who was in charge of Gandhi's new experiment in basic education. I liked his way of teaching Gandhian principles with practical application.

Towards the beginning of 1946, I met Gandhi again in Bombay. This time I was meeting him with great shame and pain. I had committed one of the greatest blunders of my life. I had fallen in love with an intelligent and beautiful girl, whose affections I had misunderstood. We liked each other. We had many things in common. We had many dreams for the future. To me it was more an intellectual companionship.

## University of Missouri Honors Mahatma Gandhi



—Photo by John Trumble

The author presenting the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi to the University of Missouri. Dr. Thomas A. Brady, Vice president of the University unveiled the portrait. Professor of History, Jesse E. Wrench is at the right.

### Let This Mark Our Close Bond



The author pays respects to the floral remains Gandhi sent by Sgt R. R. Dinkar from New

and know how he was moved, and what respect and devotion he had toward Ba

The last time I saw Gandhiji was in the middle of 1946. He was residing in one of the slum untouchable quarters in Bombay. By that time I had already made preparations to go to the land of freedom, the United States, to study journalism. I wanted to receive his blessings before I departed for the States.

When I told him of my plans, he did not agree with me. He was of the opinion that one need not go to the United States to study journalism, as India's journalistic training would be sufficient for any youth who is honest enough to pursue the profession. To him it was a mere waste of money, time and energy. I explained to him my difficulties in getting suitable training in India. He suggested that I should enter a newspaper office for practical training and get thoroughly trained for a practical job to serve the country. I explained to him how I had failed in my efforts to get into a newspaper office. He had a ready answer. He asked me to go to Ramachandranji, who had won laurels in the profession earlier, and who was then guiding South India in the new system of basic education. I had no answer. Besides, he did not agree to any national worker leaving the country when it was just on the threshold of winning freedom. I could not retrace my steps, because I had already made all preparations. I had many obligations too—to my people and friends who had helped me. I explained to him all my difficulties. He could not be convinced.

The time for parting at last arrived. Gandhiji said, "You have come here with a decision. You have decided to go and so you are going. Let me hope that you will come back with a full spirit of service to mankind. It will be a tragedy for India, if you Indian youths, after your Western environment lose faith in God, service, truth and non violence. I hope you will acquit yourself well in a dignified manner that



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—Photo by Tuan Lien-chang

The author pays respects to the floral remains and ashes of Mahatma Gandhi sent by Sgt. R. R. Diwakar from New Delhi.

is befitting India. Do not be a fool again. My best wishes are with you."

I bowed my head and saluted. He smiled. That was his last smile for me. That was my last glimpse of the Mahatma.

## TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

TRUTH and non-violence are the two great principles on which Gandhiji based his actions in his daily life. He applied them in achieving the independence of India. No nation in the world has won freedom so peacefully and smoothly as India. The full credit belongs to Gandhiji, the father of the nation.

Truth to Gandhiji was a part of his life. He preferred to say that truth is beauty and God, rather than that God is truth. Gandhiji believed that all actions and behavior of man must be tested through the channel of truth. Gandhiji's non-violent actions were always guided by truth. Without it, his strong weapon would be void. So his weapon of *Satyagraha* (truthful, non-violent passive resistance) began with truth. It sought to express truth in action. To Gandhiji, truth is God, and non violence or love is the only way to find God. R. R. Diwakar, one of Gandhiji's greatest disciples, has interpreted Gandhiji's technique of *Satyagraha* in his most marvelous book, "*Satyagraha, Its History and Technique.*" He says:

It was out of his truthful way of living that his new weapon of *Satyagraha* evolved. Truth has been Gandhiji's greatest love since his early childhood. Long before the word "*Satyagraha*" was coined in 1907, he was already following the law of *Ahimsa* and living the life of a *Satyagrahi*. He was adhering to truth through self suffering. "Returning good for evil" had caught his imagination and is still his inspiration.

Gandhiji looks upon all life as one. That is the truth of life for him. Love, the principle of identity, of attraction, is the law of life. He loves and seeks the good of all through constant service and sacrifice. When in conflict, he invites suffering by clinging to truth but never contemplates injury to others. If death comes to him through an erring brother he considers it to be a triumph of the spirit over the body. *He never harbors ill will even against opponents. He is never dogmatic about his truth and seeks to rouse the sense of fairness and justice in the opponent's mind by suffering.*

*Ahimsa is an Indian word for non-violence. This idea of*

non-violence is not new to India's religion or philosophy. Our ancient teachers have always emphasized the importance of self-purification through non-violence. This principle was confined to individual salvation, freedom from the bondage of physical, worldly life. Gandhiji gave a new orientation and interpretation to the principle of non-violence. He applied it to the whole of humanity in its salvation from all bondages of human misery, to all problems, to the entire field of politics, economics and others. Let me quote here the prophetic words of Gandhiji himself:

Non violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil doer, but it means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire's fall or its regeneration.

If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory. Then India will cease to be the pride of my heart. I am wedded to India because I owe my all to her. I believe absolutely that she has a mission for the world. She is not to copy Europe blindly. India's acceptance of the doctrine of the sword will be the hour of my trial. I hope I shall not be found wanting. My religion has no geographical limits. If I have a living faith in it, it will transcend my love for India herself. My life is dedicated to the service of India through the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism.

Gandhiji's "atom bomb" is non-violence. The evil effects of violence and war have opened the eyes of Westerners, even more since the recent World War II. They are now trying to understand the meaning of non-violence, compared with the results of violence.

People laughed when Buddha used this doctrine of non-violence to successful ends. When the great Indian Emperor, Asoka, who denounced war altogether, followed in the footsteps of Buddha, war propagandists criticized it as an act of cowardice. They even attributed the downfall of his Mauryan Empire to the creed of non-violence. People called Leo Tolstoy a blind man when he followed the same path of non-violence. After his South African success, when Gandhiji applied these same weapons of *Satyagraha*, truth and non-

violence, his opponents called him a mad man. How I wish they were alive today to witness the great triumphs of Gandhi!

Empires have been built and empires have been destroyed in this world. Many wars have been fought with either side fighting for justice. Nations have used violence throughout. They have temporarily maintained peace. It is obvious from the facts of history that one war has led to another. World War I was followed by World War II, and who knows what is ahead? There are already signs of another war—this one to be fought on a much larger scale.

What is the reason for all this? Violence, hatred and untruth. Wars are inevitable as long as they are fought with violence, and as long as the world's civilization is built on violence. What has been the fate of the great civilizations of Rome and Greece, Germany and Japan? The whole beauty of their civilization is ruined and has crumbled to pieces before violence. The same will be the case of other nations that believe in violence. It may not be today and now. But it may be tomorrow.

Then what is the hope of the world? Can the world live happily and peacefully? Yes it can. There is the symbol of peace and love in India's Mahatma Gandhi, and his two great doctrines of truth and non violence.

Nobody has understood the concept of international peace as clearly as did Gandhi. In the Western world, only such people as Einstein, Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw and Pearl Buck, could read between the lines and understand him. Gandhi has offered a great challenge to the world's leaders. The world has repeatedly failed in achieving peace through violence and such weapons as the atomic bomb. Now it is time to give a fair trial to Gandhi's alternative to war—his peace weapons of truth and non violence. 'Thoughtless rejection is as bad as unqualified acceptance.'

## FASTING

**WESTERNERS** are confused and have misunderstood the weapon of fasting often used by Gandhiji for individual and political purposes. To them, fasting is mere starvation. When Gandhiji fasted recently on two occasions to bring greater and permanent unity between Hindus and Moslems and Sikhs, many westerners realized the tremendous effect of unity it had on the Indian masses, but yet they could not approve fasting.

"Fasting is an institution as old as Adam." Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Mohammed fasted to realize the divine power, in other words to see God and to commune face to face with Him. This weapon has been used for self purification and for noble ends. Gandhiji had unquestioned faith in God. He believed that he could win an answer from God from his silent and heroic self perishing. He was the man best qualified to use that spiritual and moral weapon. He used it when he thought it best. God answered his call. Fasting as the most powerful weapon was established beyond doubt by Gandhiji through its proper application at proper times.

Gandhiji fasted seventeen times in his life. At one time it was a penitential fast for a week for the moral lapse of two inmates at Phoenix Settlement, South Africa, in 1913. He fasted to give strength and encouragement to the strikers in Ahmedabad who were losing faith in their strike. As a protest against violence and bloodshed, he fasted many times. There were occasions such as errors among his Ashram inmates, the MacDonald's Communal Award which separated the Hindus and Moslems in voting for Legislatures, a heart prayer to inspire greater vigilance and watchfulness amongst his followers in the *Harijan* cause. Gandhiji's fasts lasted from three to twenty-one days.

The following three fasts attracted the attention of the whole world. When Gandhiji began his twenty one day fast to protest the viceroy's irresponsible allegation that the All India National Congress Party was responsible for the violence and bloodshed that followed the declaration of the "Quit India Movement" by that body on August 9, 1942, he stirred the conscience of the peace loving people of the world. February 10, 1942, Gandhiji began his fast, appealing to God to judge for him. The great ordeal of Gandhiji was successfully completed and the whole world acclaimed him as the prophet of truth and justice.

His next fasts which drew the attention of the world are his Calcutta and New Delhi fasts. In order to stop the communal riots in Calcutta, he began to fast in September, 1947, till "Calcutta returned to sanity". Hindus and Moslems in Calcutta forgot their differences and came in millions to request Gandhiji to break his fast. Gandhiji broke it after the complete stoppage of riots in Calcutta.

The last and most effective of his fasts began in New Delhi on January 12, 1948. It was directed toward all people in India asking them to search their hearts in respect to Hindu Moslem unity and to bring greater and permanent unity between Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs. The whole world prayed for his life. Gandhiji broke his fast after six days. The Hindu, Moslem and Sikh leaders gave him the promise that they would stake their lives to bring unity. Gandhiji's seven conditions for bringing Hindu Moslem unity were accepted by the Indian leaders. Gandhiji achieved the distinction from all communities of being the universal father of the nation. Truth and non violence had their greatest reward in this fast.

## PRAYER

Gandhiji's daily routine would not be complete without his morning and evening prayers. Lately these prayer meetings had attracted such attention that thousands of people thronged to the prayer meeting place to pray to God with Gandhiji. Let me quote Gandhiji himself on what he thinks of prayer:

Prayer has saved my life. Without it, I should have been a lunatic long ago. I have had my share of the bitterest public and private experiences. They threw me into temporary despair. If I was able to get rid of that despair, it was because of prayer. Prayer has not been a part of my life as truth has been. Prayer came out of sheer necessity. I found myself in a plight where I could not possibly be happy without prayer. The more my faith in God increases, the more irresistible became the yearning for prayer. Life seemed to be dull and vacant without it.

Three of the greatest teachers of the world, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed, have left unimpeachable testimony that they found illumination through prayer and could not possibly live without it. Millions of Christians, Hindus and Musalmans find their only solace in life in prayer. Either you vote them down as liars, or as self-deluded people. I will say that this "lying" has a charm for me, a truth-seeker, if it is "lying" that has given me that mainstay or staff of life, without which I could not dare to live for a moment. In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon, I have never lost my peace. In fact, I have found people who envy my peace. That peace comes from prayer.

"I am not a man of learning, but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer. I am indifferent as to the form. Everyone is a law unto himself in that respect. But there are some well-marked roads, and it is safe to walk along the beaten tracks trod by the ancient teachers . . ."

Gandhiji was of the opinion that prayer was a necessity of life. He often said that if food was indispensable to the body, so was prayer for the soul. He believed in doing without food for the good of health sometimes, but he did not believe in prayer starvation. He said, "You cannot possibly have a surfeit of prayer."



## PRINCE OF PEACE

**MAHATMA GANDHI**, the prince of peace, has died on the flaming cross, like Jesus Christ. "Mahatma Gandhi Amar Ho Gai" ("Mahatma Gandhi has become immortal"), cried the millions of Indians who witnessed the bright fumes of the funeral pyre of Bapuji, when his frail body was consumed by flames and his last remains, ashes, were immersed in the holy river confluence of Sacred Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi at Allahabad.

*A great nation is orphaned by the tragic loss of this precious jewel. When brothers raised hands against brothers, killing numerous innocent people, Gandhiji worked for Hindu Moslem unity. The only hope of United India was Gandhiji. He was the only bright star of unity, on the clouded sky of Hindu Moslem bitterness and hatred. Fate willed that this single star of unity be snatched away. The climax of misery reached us when the greatest tragedy came to India and the world with the foul deed of the assassin against Gandhiji himself. I am reminded of an analogy to Abraham Lincoln. Addressing a gathering during the Civil War, Lincoln, who met the same fate as Gandhiji, declared*

*'I claim not to have controlled events but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party or man devised or expected—God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, impartial history will find there is new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.'*

*With the same kind of spirit, Gandhiji worked hard to achieve Hindu Moslem unity, knowing fully the dangers that he had to face. He believed in the ultimate triumph of his cause, because he had implicit faith in his people. He never cared for the consequences to himself. Men like him are in deed rare in this world.*

Let me conclude my description of the life mission of this great prophet, pacifist, and philosopher, with the homage paid him by his worthy successor, Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru:

"The glory has departed and the sun that warmed and brightened our lives has set and we shiver in the cold and dark. Yet, he would not have us feel this way. After all, the glory that we saw all these years, that man with the divine fire, changed us also, and such as we are, we have been moulded by him during these years, and out of that divine fire many of us also took a small spark which strengthened us, made us work to some extent on the lines that he fashioned. And so, if we praise him, our words seem rather small and if we praise him, to some extent we praise ourselves.

"Great men and eminent men have monuments in bronze and marble set up for them, but this man of divine fire managed in his life time to become enmeshed with millions of hearts so that all of us become somewhat of the stuff that he was made of, though in infinitely lesser degree. He spread out over India, not in palaces only or in selected places or in assemblies, but in every hamlet and hut of the lowly and those who suffered.

We shall always mourn him because we are human and cannot forget our beloved master, but I know that he would not like us to mourn. No tears came to his eyes when his dearest and closest went away, only a firm resolve to persevere, to serve the great cause that he had chosen. So, he would chide us if we merely mourned. That is a poor way of paying homage to him. The only way is to express our determination, to pledge ourselves anew, to dedicate ourselves to the great tasks which he undertook and accomplished to such a large extent.

He was perhaps the greatest symbol of the India of the past, and may I say of the India of the future that we could have had. We stand on this perilous edge of the present, between that past and the future to be, and we face all manner of perils, and the greatest peril is sometimes the lack of faith which comes to us, the sense of frustration that comes to us, the sinking of the heart and of the spirit that comes to us when we see ideals becoming unreal and we see the great things that we talked about somehow becoming empty words and life taking a different course. Yet I do not believe that perhaps this period will pass soon enough. Great as this man of God was in his life, he has been greater in his death and I have not the shadow of doubt that by his death he has served the great cause as he served it throughout his life.

Long ages afterwards history will judge of this period we have passed through. It will judge of the successes and the failures. We are too near it to be proper judges and to understand what has happened and what has not happened. All we know is that there was a glory and it is no more. All we know is that for the moment there is darkness, not so dark certainly because when we look into our hearts we see in memory a glory, though it is no more. All we know is that he lighted, and where this living flame exists there will not be darkness in this land and we shall be able with our effort, remembering him

and following his path to illuminate this land again small as we are but still with the fire that he kindled in us

Mahatma Gandhi is dead, but the principles of truth and non violence, peace and brotherhood, associated with him, will ever shine and remain as long as mankind exists Gandhi has joined the galaxy of martyrs "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church" He has become immortal by his martyrdom Every particle of dust that he has trodden on this earth will ever reverberate his message of peace and chant his beloved song

*Raghupathi Raghava Raja Ram,  
Pathitha Pavana Sita Ram  
Eswara Alla Tere Nam,  
Sab ko San Mathi De Bhagwan.*

## PART II

*"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven"*

*Famous words these, with which Wordsworth celebrates the French Revolution. A century and a half after this cataclysm in France came another great movement of men—the August Revolution in India—the motive of which was to realize the meaning of three cardinal principles enunciated by the earlier revolution. That all races have an equal right to what is good, beautiful and true in life, that the fact of being born in Asia or Africa do not constitute a disqualification in respect of that right, that, in other words, the quantity of pigment below the skin or the shape of the nose cannot deprive a human being of his legitimate right to live freely—these in effect, were what the glorious "Quit India" Movement (August Revolution of 1942) sought to establish.*

## MAHADEVAPPA—THE IMMORTAL

*"What greater solace can there be than the feeling that one has lived and died for a principle? What higher satisfaction can a man possess than the knowledge that his spirit will beget kindred spirits to carry on his unfinished task? What better reward can a soul desire than the certainty that his message will be wafted over hills and dales and over the broad plains to every corner of his land and across the seas to distant lands? What higher consummation can life attain than peaceful self immolation at the altar of one's cause?"*

*"The individual must die, so that the nation may live Today I must die so that India may live and may win freedom and glory"*

*Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*

IT IS NO MORE coincidence that the only session of the

Indian National Congress over which the maker of modern India, Mahatma Gandhi, presided should have been held in Karnataka, a province in southern India For Karnataka has been the most faithful follower of Gandhiji's method of thought and action

With a peculiar gift of reticence which she has inherited from the past, Karnataka is unostentatious about the part she has played in the national struggle during the past quarter of a century, when the Gandhian era in Indian politics began

An outstanding feature of India's struggle for freedom under Gandhiji's leadership is that it assumes a highly concentrated form every ten years or so There was, first of all, the struggle of the early 'twenties, then the struggle of the early 'thirties and then the struggle of '42 In every one of these brave bids for freedom, it was Karnataka which held out until the last, long after her sister provinces had fallen away, weary and worn out

Karnataka has had an able band of leaders, and almost all of them have been the exemplars of the motto, "Tireless in

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seventy eight Is a greater tribute than this necessary for Mahadevappa's capabilities?

### *Home Coming*

There were meetings, tele a tetes, commissions, round table conferences committees, white papers, reports, truces, pacts and pledges galore, before and after the Dandi March A great deal was said and little was done But the real doers quietly returned to their tasks, carrying Gandhiji's message of constructive work They spread to different parts of India even as the Buddha's disciples distributed themselves all over the world. Among these men with a mission was Mahadevappa, who after the Salt Satyagraha came back to the province of his birth

Wife and children, an English philosopher remarks, are hostages given to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises The ship of many a great man's life has been wrecked on the rock of his wife's non cooperation One of the greatest gifts that a man can have is a wife who will be half himself in the best sense of the word, aiding him in his good enterprises and confronting him in adversity

Mahadevappa was fortunate in having such a noble lady for his partner He must be deemed doubly fortunate, considering the fact that he was forced into marriage against his will But both husband and wife must be congratulated because they managed to achieve understanding and harmony in spite of the embarrassing beginning of their conjugal life.

When therefore, Mahadev made up his mind to settle down to his mission of rural uplift his wife whole heartedly pledged herself to national work Mahadev received additional courage when he learned her decision Srimati (Mrs) Sidhamati then went to Sabarmati Ashram and took training in rural work in order to labor side by side with her husband. When the Civil Disobedience Movement was started she plunged into it, brushing aside all thoughts of security She was arrested twice and put into prison

## Koradur Ashram

Sidhamathi persuaded Mahadev to establish an *Ashram* similar to Sabarmati. Koradur, a village near Hosanur, in Dharwad district, was chosen as the site for the ashram. Friends, well wishers and elders came forward to support him. The aim of the founders of the ashram was the amelioration of the down trodden people in the surrounding villages through the constructive program of Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahadev lost no time in organizing the villagers. His *ashram* soon became a center of attraction to the villagers. It became their club room and college, hospital and temple. It also offered them employment. The villagers could, by plugging the *charaka*, supplement their meager income. Through the manifold activities of the *ashram*, the villagers gradually realized the value of self sufficiency. The evening prayers drew all the village. Their interest did not flag, it increased day by day.

Did the villagers suffer from pettiness? Were there differences between the different groups inside the village, or between father and son, husband and wife? Was anyone caught in economic straits? Did anybody want a wise and understanding soul to offer succor and consolation, somebody from whose love and kindness one could safely draw? All such persons ran to the Koradur *ashram*.

Both in 1932 and 1940 Mahadev was put in jail, Satyagrahi that he was. But, unlike a number of patriots, his patriotism did not begin and end with jail going. After all, jail going is not a great thing. It is at any rate less arduous and indeed less valuable than constructive work. It is this latter and more difficult path that Mahadevappa chose for himself. Khadi work (spinning and weaving home made cloth) and volunteer organization were two fields most dear to him. There was not a single instance when he hungered for power. Neither did he ever mix himself up with that bane of Karnataka—communalism. Mahadev was above any communalism, for every ounce of his energy and capacity for service was



pledged to the upliftment of the country as a whole, irrespective of communities. For this purpose, he worked among the masses, contacted the villagers and brought about unity.

### *August Mahadev*

The Quit India Movement of 1942 revealed a new potentiality in Mahadev. Revolution was in the air during those hectic days, and Mahadev's village was not unaffected by it. Gandhiji gave the "do or die" *mantra* (battle cry). Mahadev took his *Guru's* (teacher) behest seriously, as was expected of him.

The ruling power on August 9 stole the nation's leaders and locked them up behind tall unknown gates. In the absence of these leaders every able organizer found it his duty to guide the masses. The occasion did not find Mahadev wanting. The part he and his followers played is remarkable. His activities spread from his tiny village to the whole of the subdivision, yet nobody knew the network of his organization. The government tried its best to unearth these subterranean heroes, but they could not.

The months of January, February and March in 1943 were hard months for the government. The annual revenue had to be collected in those months. The patels had made such collection very difficult by resigning their posts in many villages. In some places people refused to pay taxes to the alien government. In other places what was collected was beset and robbed, and mounted police were brought from Satara, (famous place for military strength) to terrorize the people. But nothing could prevent the fighters of freedom from continuing their activities. They did not budge an inch from their path of action, because theirs was a decision of ripe thought. The people had become masters in many a village, and government machinery was well nigh defunct.

Many workers and leaders were declared absconders and heavy prices were put on their heads. But the mighty government could not find and capture those so-called absconders,

though they were always to be seen with the people. Among them Mahadevappa Mylar was prominent.

### *Martyrdom*

It was the first of April, 1943. On that day Mahadev with his trusted followers, Thirukappa, and Veersah, waylaid a revenue collection party in Hosarathi, by the side of the river Varada in Karnataka. By this time, Mahadev and his party had, according to official reckoning, been responsible for seventy four "affairs." Mahadev's method of executing these "affairs" is to be noted. If burning of village *chavadis* was on his list, he would see that the adjoining houses were not in the least affected, although the actual government building was burned. He would personally inspect and direct the burning of the government *chavadis* (offices). As a rule no schools were burned, because he knew that the education of his own children would suffer. If he attacked mail bags or post offices, he would safely send the money orders and insured letters to the respective people. There is not even a single instance of loss of private property or loss of life because of his activities.

Mahadev worked on a systematic basis. He used to spend nights laying his plans and then would carry them out, with the help of his comrades, during the day. He had successfully executed seventy four "affairs", then came the seventy fifth.

Three days before what turned out to be his last adventure, Mahadev conferred with his colleagues. He is reported to have said, 'Gandhiji is now seventy four years old. We have carried out seventy four programmes. Gandhiji will enter his seventy fifth year next October. We will celebrate his birthday with the seventy fifth item of our program which will be the seizure of the revenue collections of Hosarathi village. This shall be our last program. Therefore, only such comrades as are prepared to lay down their lives should come forth.' No sooner had he spoken these words than twenty two workers came forward to follow him.

A few days before the fateful April 1, Mahadev had heard the news that boxes containing the money received from revenue collections in Hosarithi were being taken to the Taluk (county) headquarters. Mahadev and his men immediately decided to seize the treasure, because they thought that the money belonged to the free village.

The strong boxes were being kept for the night behind iron bars inside a temple on the banks of the river. A police party of twelve, fully armed, was guarding the treasure. Nobody could even peep into the temple without being noticed by the guards. A group of four would be on duty at a time, the others would be resting near at hand. The treasure was kept in the "Garbhagudi" (the place where the idol of worship is kept).

It was morning and, except the four who were on duty, the guards had gone for their morning ablutions. Mahadev, brave soul, came openly with four others and overpowered three guards. Immediately, Mahadev and his friends began to drag the treasure out into the open. They could not get it because an iron chain was tied to it. The police guard who was standing in front of the treasure was afraid, and he hid himself in a dark corner of the temple.

By this time, two other followers of Mahadev came and took six guns. The remaining friends and Mahadev tried hard to remove the box containing money. At last the box with the iron chain was removed, and all four brought the money box outside the "Garbhagudi." The guard who had remained hidden inside saw his chance and began to fire. One shot went through the hand of Mahadev. A second one pierced his back when he was seeing what had happened to his hand. He fell down with the box in his hand, blood flowing down from his body. Enraged at the ghastly behaviour of the police guard, Tirukaiah and Veeraiah, the other two trusted followers of Mahadev, dragged the policeman from his hiding place.

Mahadev, though mortally wounded, kept exhorting his followers not to take revenge on the policeman until the very end.

dearer to her than her own child By continuing to serve the *ashram* she would continue to please her husband So, with the firm realization of God's love, the depth of fealty, and not the tumult of the soul, the brave wife assumed full responsibility for the *ashram* and its constructive activities Defeat and dismay have no place in a war for freedom

### *Mahatma's Concern*

Mahatma Gandhi was resting at the Nature Cure Clinic at Poona, when he was told of Mahadev's death "Oh, Mahadev was my disciple," was the remark of Mahatma For a while Mahatmajī was silent Then he heaved a long sigh and turned his attention to other things

On the afternoon of August 8, 1942, a few hours before the All India Congress Committee passed the celebrated "Quit India Resolution" and appointed Mahatma Gandhi to lead it, Shri Gopala Rao Belawadi of Karnataka stepped on the dias and approached the pilot of India for a message Gandhiji gave a brief and cryptic message "I expect all Karnatakas to play their part in the coming *Yagna* (ordeal) " When the news of Mahadev's death was conveyed to him, Bapuji must have realized that Karnataka did play her part in the freedom *Yagna*.

## SHANKARAPPA—STUDENT MARTYR

*"I have got my leave Bid me fareuwell, my Brothers' I  
bow to you all and take my departure*

*"Here I give back the keys of my door—and I give up all  
claims to my house I only ask for last kind words from you.*

*'We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I  
could give Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my  
dark corner is out A summons has come and I am ready for  
the journey"*

*Rabindranath Tagore*

**MYSORE STATE** promptly answered the call of the nation on August, 1912 Students there played a heroic part in the struggle, even when all the accepted leaders of the Congress had been arrested on their way home from the historic All India Congress Committee meeting And the people, true to their sense of patriotism gave a fitting reply to the brutal repression pursued by the "model government" of Mysore.

### *Students*

The students' movement took on its shoulders the task of preserving the honor of the state Students' unions were active in almost all the districts, specially so in Mysore and Bangalore In union students all over the nine districts of the state began to work. Colleges became meeting places of the August heroes. Hostels gave a resting place to the workers. Professors and lecturers came to the students to break their resolution, but they heard the lectures of their own students. The strike went on for sixty days.

The government of Mysore—a miniatate of the autocratic and irresponsible government of India—only more feudal—was on the offensive Professors everywhere were dispersed with a show of r. p. t. Student leaders and workers were

arrested by the hundreds Houses of the students were searched Girl volunteers were man handled Every kind of atrocity was perpetrated There were many *lathi* charges, (beating volunteers with long bambo sticks) and shootings

Mysore City, the capital of the state and usually described as the City of Gardens, is also a city of students In the few months following August, 1942, the local prison, too, was humming with students Four hundred of us were lodged in that narrow prison But stone walls do not a prison make We were locked but could our spirit be chained?

Within that narrow rectangle we held meetings, processions, prayers, protests, discussions and debates There were all types and shades of students, future politicians, commanders, engineers, doctors, economists, journalists, lawyers and workers The government had chalked out a plan for curbing the spirit of the students, but the plan miscarried Instead, our resolve was doubled, our determination to fight stiffened and our patriotism became deeper The student population had suddenly transformed the Mysore prison into a national training college for blossoming patriots

### *Legislators Meet*

Reports of our activities reached the authorities Our political discussions, study circles, volunteer organizations, and our firm faith must have upset them The need for devising a new warfare of nerves was occupying their attention At that time the legislators of Mysore had assembled in the city One of them, a Hindu Mahasabhaite, erstwhile congressman and a renegade, was sent for negotiations Prior to this, the district boss had come to the jail to try to talk the students back into loyalty and had met with their unanimous disapproval in spite of the fatherly pose that he struck The saffron capped legislator negotiator was sent back with an uncompromising reply of "No negotiations without release of all students and teachers connected with the student movement"

The government was appraised of these firm resolutions

And the government was afraid. It wanted to do something to disrupt the students' solidarity. It fancied that resorting to the rod was the best remedy. The man then law minister thought of a blow to the unarmed non violent detenus (prisoners) and convicts in the Mysore jail.

Clever and subtle were the methods by which the government prepared the way for a *lathi* charge. They began to cut down the rations given to the political prisoners. Then, seeing that even this measure had little effect in curbing the spirit of the students, they thrust on them a supply official under whose regime the food given to them steadily deteriorated both in quantity and quality. For example, one day *Saru* (soup) was served in a tub in which was once kept phenol! Such was their callous and calculated indifference in the treatment of detenus.

### *Red Letter Day*

October 27 is a red letter day in the history of the students' movement in Mysore. It was on that day comrade Shankarappa gave his precious life to the Motherland. Shankarappa was not a leader of students, but he was but a disciplined volunteer student from a local high school. He was the embodiment of the silent and untiring worker.

On midnight of October 27, the government wreaked its vengeance on the student prisoners of Mysore. Twenty four detenus, who had been prosecuted under the demoniacal defense of India rules, were taken to a special court, one hundred yards from the jail gates. The government was afraid to try them in the usual courts. Even with all the elaborate machinery of the military and police at its command it was not able to control the crowd that used to come to the courts to honor the student leaders.

On the fateful day the special court held its sittings and closed the proceedings at 6 p.m. It was the habit of the jail authorities to serve lunch to the students in the afternoon. But that day they refused to serve lunch to the prisoners who

had been removed from the prison in the morning. The students in their turn refused to re enter the jail gates without their due. This was taken as a pretext to strike at the students. Three hundred reserve police, drunk and equipped with batons and *lathis*, were sent to the aid of the regular police men.

### *Hungry For Freedom*

Meanwhile, all the student prisoners in the jail who had somehow heard of this, lined up near the inside gates of the jail and demanded that the grievances of their comrades outside be redressed. And outside the jail gates, the hungry prisoners squatted on the field and sang national songs. In a true sense they were hungry—hungry for freedom.

The situation became worse. Preparations were being made for the forthcoming brutality. Bandage cloth, lint, tincture of iodine and other medical accessories were brought by the jail doctor. Everything was ready for the hunt. But still there was the mockery of negotiations, telephone talks, and all that. The jail superintendent did not want compromise. The man then law minister was determined to strike.

And so at 11.45 at night, the twenty four detenus were asked to go inside the jail gates on pain of a *lathi* charge and beatings. The students were adamant. Two police officers, an inspector and a sub inspector, who were notorious for their cruelty, lifted the detenus one by one and hurled them through a narrow window in the gate into the prison precincts. The three hundred who were watching this ghastly scene, welcomed back their brethren.

By this time the police and the drunken reserves were on the premises of the jail ready to obey their bosses. All the twenty four were in, the disciplined students had given them a hearty reception and all were ready to return to their barracks to take their food. The issue being over, the commander of the students gave orders for dispersal, and all believed that nothing more would happen.



## *The Brutal Charge*

But a moment after their dispersal came the stab in the back. A shout came from the superintendent, "Charge on!" Instantly all was bedlam. The police, who were ready, charged on the peaceful students with *lathis* and batons. The students ran helter skelter. Several vainly tried to save themselves by hiding in the kitchen and latrines. Imagine a chase of 300 students by 500 armed men in an enclosed area only one fur long square. The police used their *lathis* without mitigation or remorse, particularly on the students who had taken a leading part in the movement. They trampled some under their military iron boots, and one such victim of trampling was our beloved Shankar.

Shankar was one of the students who had gone outside on that day. He was beaten. He had been thrown inside, he was crushed under the boots of the police. He was kicked on the breast, blood poured from his body. But in spite of his serious injuries, he rescued a small lad of fourteen from the clutches of the police.

The hunt lasted from eleven o'clock to one o'clock in the morning. The order to stop the *lathi* charge was given at last, but the over zealous policemen did not obey their bosses.

The *lathi* charge had its comic aspects, too. Many police men abused and beat the walls, not being capable of distinguishing between the animate and the inanimate.

Not even the hospital ward was spared by them. There I had lain bedridden for the past month. I had a temperature of 105° at that time. In the depth of night I heard the pathetic groans and the muffled moanings. I also heard the hideous cacophony of the policemen's shouts. I heard soft feet running to escape from the chase of booted feet. I heard the dull thud of a baton descending on a skull and the sharper noise of a *lathi* slashing the back of a victim. There I lay helpless, unable to do anything, not even able to share some of the beatings, for that would have been much better than being an impotent spectator of this inhuman drama.

But suddenly I heard a stampede. I discerned the sound of forty or fifty boots. The sound was drawing near. About twenty policemen rushed toward the hospital ward like a simoom. But they found the door locked. They were disappointed and enraged. They shook the bars of the door as a mad gorilla would shake the bars of his cage. But iron was too strong for them, and they consoled themselves by beating the walls and bars. They thrust their hands between the bars of the door and beat on the floor of the ward. Then suddenly they retired after twenty minutes of futile onslaught.

It was about one o'clock when the police stopped their merciless beating. The food that had been prepared for the detenus was served to the police—a reward for their bravery. All the students, injured, maimed and slashed, were locked in their barracks without food or water. In all, two hundred received injuries, of those, eighty had been soundly beaten and three were in a dangerous condition.

Shanker was one of the three. His cot was at the side of mine. When I saw him five hours later, he showed no anxiety. He got up from his bed and began nursing other victims. But at about ten o'clock he began to vomit blood. There was a pain in his chest. The doctor was informed. A cup of blood that Shankar vomited was taken to the superintendent to convince him of the seriousness of Shankar's condition. But in the very face of the doctor, the superintendent denied it was blood.

The jail was under police control, and no one outside knew about Shankar's condition. Blood flowed from him continuously. We, who were ailing with him, demanded that he should be taken to the General Hospital for better treatment. The superintendent, afraid to let the public see him, refused our request. But because of the insistence of other prison officials, a celebrated heart specialist, an Austrian Jew who fled his country at the time of the *Anschluss* and who was in the General Hospital at Mysore, was brought to the jail. It

was at his insistence that Shankar was taken to the General Hospital

When he was leaving the jail, Shankar bade goodbye to all of us, his fellow prisoners That was the last time we saw the nineteen year old lad Human ingenuity could not set right the havoc done by human viciousness At three the next morning, Shankar breathed his last

We heard the news at about five o'clock the same morning We came together, slipping out of our barracks, and paid our homage to the departed patriot

The news of the death of Shankar was conveyed to his parents in the city He was their only son The news spread in the city like wildfire Thousands crowded near the hospital and asked that the body be handed over to the public The public desired to pay tribute to the dauntless lad of Mysore Even that was not to be Authorities feared Shankarappa dead as much as they feared Shankarappa alive

### *Long Live Shankar*

Public clamour was so great that the government, much against its will, had to break its guilty silence A communique was issued which said that the police had been forced to resort to a mild charge outside the jail premises and added that the death of Shankar was due to pneumonia—all a deliberate lie

Let the government hold an inquiry even now The truth will win out It is five and a half years since Shankar's death, but the memories of the four hundred students who witnessed the ghastly scene are fresh

Thirty eight months after this incident, a great multitude gathered at another native state more than a thousand miles to the north of Mysore It was memorable occasion, for the State's People's Conference which met at Udiapur in the last week of December, 1945 under the presidentship of Pandit Jawaharalal Nehru, will go down in Indian history as the oc

casion which offered a solution to the ticklish problem of the states

The conference took place at a critical juncture of events. Much had to be summed up. The cataclysm of 1942 had necessitated thinking in terms of new definitions and new affinities. Much had to be formulated for the future. Nehru read the condolence resolution. Familiar names there were in that resolution—those of the departed great names dear to every household in India—Mahadev Desai, Kasturi Bai, Ranjit Pandit, Kaujalgi Hanumantha Rao and others. And at the end of all these familiar names, there was a name which few in the audience had heard. It was the name of Shankar of Mysore.

He was in that resolution, placed among the immortals. And an immortal he is. In achievement he was not as great as others. But in nobility, in humility, in steadfastness, in dignity, in the will to serve, in the readiness to sacrifice and in sacrifice itself, Shankar deserves a place among those with whom his name was mentioned.

His was the death which redeems the lives of us lesser men.

## ISSUR MARTYRS

*"Eternal spirit of the chainless Mind!  
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art!  
For there thy habitation is the heart  
The heart which love of thee alone can bind!  
"And when thy sons to fetters are consigned  
To fetters, and the damp vaults dayless gloom  
Their country conquers with their martyrdom  
And freedom's fame find wings on every wind."*

*Lord Byron*

**EVEN AS** Gujerat is proud of her Bardoli, the United Provinces of Ballia and Bengal of Midnapur, the Central Provinces of Chimur and Ashti, so is Karnataka proud of Issur.

The August Revolution of 1942 in India made history in the world. On August 8, the All India Congress Committee, at its historic session in Bombay passed the famous "Quit India" resolution whose echos were heard the world over. It demanded that the British withdraw from India and asked the Indian people to declare themselves free. It sanctioned the mass struggle on non-violent lines under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi for obtaining freedom, with the withdrawal of British power from India. But before the campaign could be started, the Congress leaders and Gandhiji were arrested and put into prison. But this could not prevent the proud tale of a nation's uprising against tyranny and the terrible tale of ruthless repression. The story of the August Revolution in India is written in indelible blood, and bullets have punctuated it. The finis of the freedom struggle was written on August 15, 1947, when India became a free and independent nation. Below is a chapter in the history of the August movement.

The Indian states, the last outposts of feudalism in the whole

world, make it a point to out herod the Herod of British Imperialism. They even take a pride in beating the obscurantist government of India at its own game. And so it was in the August Freedom Movement. The government of Mysore, with indecent haste and assiduousness, used all its monstrous weapons in its repertoire to curb the people's movement. Leaders were arrested. The press was gagged. Meetings were banned. All imaginable repressive measures were brought into force. There were *lathi* charges and firing galore. By releasing an orgy of violence, the government invited the people also to take to violence.

There was trouble in all the districts of the state. The Bangalore firing on August 17, when even cannons were brought into the roads, killed eleven persons according to the official figures, and at least seventy according to reliable non official statistics. Fire was opened on villages in Shrivana Belagola. There was firing in Tiptur, Davanagere and other places\*. Collective fines were imposed on a number of villagers. More than a thousand students were arrested, many hundreds were sentenced to long terms in prison. The number of laborers taken in was also about 1,500 and at least 2,000 *kisans* (farmers) were hauled up. Hundreds of labor leaders were prohibited from entering their home towns. There was much torture and many beatings.

Issur, a very small village in the rich Malnad district of Shimoga, in Mysore State, declared independence. The events that happened in that village were marvelous. On the other hand, the action of the government was monstrous. The behavior of the police and the military was notorious. The drama enacted by the government of Mysore was stupid, thoughtless, and even merciless. To corroborate these facts a full history of the most important events is essential.

Issur is a compact village, consisting of about 2,000 people. Lingayets (worshippers of Siva), form the bulk of the

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\*These are towns in Mysore State

population. The cardinal points preached by Sri Basava, the great religious saint of Lingayet Saivism, were equality and the value of manual labor. This saga of the thirteenth century envisaged a glorious era of enlightened republicanism, of sweetness and light, of tender mercy and loving kindness. But Sri Basava also impressed upon his followers the need for discipline, discipline of desires and doings. He prescribed abstinence and courage as the ideals to be followed by a true *Bhakta* (devotee). Therefore, the Lingayets never lack boldness. In addition, the Lingayets have evolved a close knit community life. It is no wonder, therefore, that with this historical tradition behind them the people of Issur played the heroic part they did in the 1942 movement.

### *National Awakening*

September 26, 27, 28, and 29 are the dates that will be remembered in history in Mysore. Those four days saw a small village declare its independence and become free. Patels and shanbogs (village heads) of the neighboring taluks were ready with their resignations. Thirty patels from Sorab, Anavatti, Kupagadde and Jade units had already sent their resignations.

On September 26, the patel and the shanbogh of Issur village began to collect the annual revenue. The patel had, in many meetings held earlier in that village, not only presided but had declared that he would resign his job. The young boys of the village who were returning home after their daily *prabhatpheri* (a procession of volunteers who march singing national songs), saw two village officers sitting in the Basavara Temple. They shouted "Resign your jobs," "Wear Gandhi caps"\*

The elder boys were exhorting the Patel to keep his word by sending in his resignation. Some of the more sprightly of

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\* (A hat made of home spun cotton yarn usually worn by Gandhiji's followers and members of the premier political organization the All India National Congress, was referred to as a Gandhi cap.)

the boys ran away with the files and records and hid them. The boys said that the records would be given back only if the Patel and the Shanbough wore Gandhi caps. After much haggling the patel and shanbough turned back in vain, only to complain of the situation to their boss, the amildar, the chief revenue officer of Taluk and also the magistrate, who was residing at his headquarters, Shikarpur, three miles from Issur. When he heard the complaint, the amildar rebuked the patel and the shanbough and said that they were responsible for the occurrence.

### *Independence Declared*

The patel and the shanbough made their appearance in Issur the next morning and told the villagers that the amildar would be coming there. The amildar was a good young man. He had worn the Gandhi cap many times in other villages, when he was forced to wear it. Unlike some Indian officers he knew that after all he was an Indian.

But by that time a drama had been enacted in the village. The boys of the village had assembled in the local Basaveswara Temple and had formed a judicial tribunal. They had elected a twelve year old boy, Jayadev, as the amildar of the village. The patel and the shanbough had come to the village to inform the residents of the arrival of the real amildar, and were leaving the village in disgust because the amildar had not turned up even after the lapse of half a day. They were called back by the boy amildar of the independent village. In the open "court" before the citizens of Issur, the boy amildar asked these revenue officers of the village to resign on pain of severe punishment. The patel and the shanbough were dumbfounded. They did not know what to do. They refused to wear Gandhi caps. The boy amildar read out his sentence promptly, to stand on one leg continuously for three hours, and to pay a fine of 50 Rupees (equivalent to \$16), and also to resign. Gandhi caps were placed on their heads. They were made to hold three-colored national flags and to take an oath of al



legiance to the new amildar of the independent village. After they did this the new amildar appointed them the patel and the shanbough of the independent village. Then within ten minutes, the elected assembly was dispersed. With wry faces and burning anger, the patel and shanbough left the village.

### *Blood Bath*

Next morning saw the amildar on a visit to the independent village. The boys and girls, who had finished their *prabhat pheri*, assembled at the temple after hearing of the arrival of the amildar. They boy amildar ordered the official amildar to wear a Gandhi cap on the ground that it was a free village. Gandhi caps were given to the Amildar and the police officials who had accompanied him. The amildar with a hearty laugh received the white cap. But the attitude of one of the sub inspectors of police enraged the boys. The sub inspector not only threw away the cap but also began to strike at the boys.

The sub inspector thrashed some boys and dragged the others. On his orders the national flag that was flying on the *pandal* (open meeting place), was removed and torn to pieces by the police. They trampled on the pieces. The boys appealed to the police and begged them not to dishonor the flag. Their appeal was met with a *lathi* charge by the police. The elders of the village begged the police with folded hands not to beat the children. But the soft request failed to have any effect. Pandemonium prevailed.

To make matters worse, the sub inspector showed his revolver in order to frighten the boys into obedience. The Amildar ordered the sub inspector to put away the revolver. But evil destiny goaded the sub inspector to respect only his own impulse. He shot into the group of boys. Some were wounded and fell down bleeding in the streets. It was a horrible sight. On hearing that children had been fired on, the elders of the village ran to the spot to protest against the brutality. The women of the village came out of the kitchens

to nurse their boys. But an amicable settlement was spurned by the police. Fighting broke out between the people and the police, or rather, the government. Due to the brutality of the police, non violence gave way to mob violence. The amildar—even the good amildar and the sub inspector—were beaten to death. Other police officials received minor injuries and ran away to nearby villages. The dead bodies of the amildar and the sub inspector were lying in the village.

This affair took place at ten a.m. The villagers had not expected that the officers would die. At about four o'clock some of the leaders of the neighboring villages came and took the bodies of the Amildar and sub inspector to a nearby hospital. Medical aid was given immediately, but they were already dead.

### *Village Burned*

Next morning Issur was cordoned by two thousand people from neighboring villages for protecting against any possible harrassment from the all powerful government. The deputy commissioner of the district was to visit the village that day. All precautionary measures were taken for his arrival. The military and the reserve police entered the outskirts of the village. They began to shoot their way through for half a mile and continued firing till they had settled in the village safely. The villagers, seeing this monstrous and ghastly act, locked their houses and ran away helter skelter. The women remained in the village, only to be molested.

It was a terrible day for the independent Issurians. The police and the military took control of the village and began looting and pillaging. Houses were set on fire and the villagers' money was stolen. Persons who were not involved at all were arrested on charges of murder and dacoity. Third degree measures were adopted by the police and the military. In one word, the whole village was destroyed, not by hooligans or dacoits, but by that arm of government which was supposed to maintain law and order.

Issur was more wealthy than the adjoining village. Of the many *Sahukars* (rich men), Basavannappa was considered to be one of the most prominent. He was a nationalist and his whole family was also patriotic. The police, suspecting that he and his family were responsible for the trouble, burned his house, looted his belongings and took away his food. The government tried its best to arrest Basavannappa, but his whereabouts is yet to be discovered. He is still successfully evading his pursuers. With all the paraphernalia of the C I D (F B I of India), Basavannappa's whereabouts remain a mystery. A warrant is waiting for him. Some say he is dead. Who knows?

Repression, with wide open jaws, prevailed for a fortnight. Fifty persons were arrested on charge of murder. A special court was established to try these people under the infamous special courts ordinance, which was later found to have inadequate legal sanction and was scrapped.

Most of the prosecution witnesses were government servants. For days and weeks the court sat and gave its verdicts. Eleven persons were to be hanged. Some were released. Others were to suffer imprisonment, ranging from one year to transportation for life. There was an appeal to the high court by which the lives of six heroes were saved, the other five condemned to hang had to seek the mercy of God.

Three months later, there was a second Issur trial when some of the absconding persons had been caught. In this trial one was sentenced to death and thirteen to long terms of imprisonment.

### *Patriots Hanged*

The whole of Mysore was bewildered when it heard the judgments of the courts. Agitation began everywhere. The leaders of the people were all in jail. What could they do? Outside the jails the people rose to the occasion. Thousands of meetings were held to demand the release of Issur patriots. There was only one chance to save the victims. That was by

an appeal for mercy to His Highness, the Maharaja. Thousands of people from all over the state sent in their memoranda to His Highness to save the young lives. We, too, from prison cells, sent our memorandum and appeal. The patriotic wives of the victims made their ways to the palace and requested His Highness to bless their husbands with mercy and save their *Mangalya* \* There was a ray of hope.

Days went by without anything extraordinary happening. All were expecting the mercy appeal to be granted. Instead, news spread like wildfire one morning that the mercy petition had been rejected and the Issur prisoners would be hanged by turns on three successive days. The whole country mourned.

On April 5, 6, and 7 the young heroes—every one of them was under thirty—were hanged in the Bangalore Central Jail.

Issur patriots were not to be saved, as Ashti Chimur patriots were saved. The crime of both the villagers was the same, acting for the freedom of the country. The sufferings also were of the same degree. But how is it the Issur patriots were hanged and Ashti Chimur patriots were saved? The reason again is to be traced to the fact that Issur was situated in a state while Ashti and Chimur belonged to a British province. Repression in a state is of double degree, because the feudalism, too, is doubly strong. Moreover, the political consciousness of the people in the provinces is greater than that of the people in a state.

The happenings of Ashti Chimur and of Issur were contemporaneous. The trials, too, were held at about the same time. But the government of Mysore rushed to execute the Issur heroes without even allowing a lag of four months, whereas, in the case of Ashti heroes, there was a lapse of nearly two years which turned out to be beneficial. This only proves that the wheels of British justice, which grind slowly if any good is to be done, grind indecently fast if harm is to be meted out.

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\* (Mangalya is a holy necklace worn by Indian wives in their marriage ceremony as a mark of their attaining sathihood. When their husbands die this holy tie, Mangalya, will be removed.)

Leaders, workers and congressmen in British India worked day and night, and gave their all for the rescue of the Ashti-Chimur patriots. Even then they did not succeed at first. The King Emperor himself did not pardon them. The people, however, placed their full confidence in providence. Mahatama Gandhi came to the rescue of the patriots and prayed to Almighty for their lives. His prayer was heard. The executions were stayed. Later the viceroy commuted the death sentences into one of transportation for life. The precious lives of seven patriots of Ashti and Chimur were saved in 1945. But 1943 was not 1945. And the five of Issur lost their lives.

Whatever might be the magnitude of the offense of those Issur prisoners, people expected that a Maharaja, who was after all an Indian by birth, would save their lives. But it was not so. Where a white bureaucracy showed mercy, a brown bureaucracy did not.

The five of Issur were lost forever: Gurappa, Shankarappa, Phaniappachari, Narayanachari and Mallappa.

But even as the poet sang:

"There is no Death! What seems so is transition  
This life of Mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,  
Whose portal we call Death."

So the death of these five great sons of Mysore, which made martyrs of them, has been in its sheer abandon to courage, in its unreserved self-abnegation and in its unsurpassable sacrifice, a beacon of light to all fighters for freedom and to all crusaders for liberty.

Three of the sentenced were brothers. One was murdered by authority on the gallows, and the high court spared the lives of the other two. But they were not at all happy to survive their brother. How their mother must have felt this! Her husband had been dead many years, and she came alone over a distance of three hundred miles to get a last glimpse of her son. She saw him on a fine warm morning; and twenty-four hours later the charm of death separated him from her.

The hero, it is said, did not even shed his last tears in front of his mother. He had nothing to regret. The glory of martyrdom had made him a purer being. That is probably why the other Issur prisoners, particularly those who were sentenced to lifelong imprisonment, felt they had been better executed.

About twenty-five of the Issur prisoners were still rotting in the prison cells of Bangalore Central Jail, serving long terms of imprisonment. Among them were three young women, Sri Halamma, Rudramma and Parwathamma undergoing life sentences. Halamma is the wife of the mysterious Basvannappa who has baffled the police, and she is also the mother of the first amildar of the independent village, the boy of twelve. The government of Mysore had not released them lest those women should kindle the torch of freedom. The moral pusillanimity of the government is indicated in imprisoning these innocent people.

Four years elapsed after the Issurians were hanged and imprisoned. The prisoners were suffering long terms of imprisonment. All the other political prisoners were released but not the Issurians, for "they had been classified as criminals." The love of freedom is a crime?

With the birth of Indian freedom, the autocratic princely State of Mysore could not suppress the freedom loving people of Mysore. Even then, the dewan with his henchmen-ministers tried to suppress in vain. Another struggle, bigger than the 1942 August movement, had to be launched in the state to attain full responsible government under the aegis of His Highness. The Mysore State Congress Party with the moral support of Mahatma Gandhi and the newly formed dominion of India, carried the struggle over forty-five days. His Highness, in a royal proclamation granted full responsible government.

On October 21, 1947, the popular leaders of Mysore took charge of the administration of Mysore under the leadership of K. Chengalaraya Reddy, who later became the chief minister of Mysore. The first act of the popular ministry was to release all the political prisoners. The Issur patriots who had

been rotting in the prison since 1943, were released unconditionally by the popular ministry. The three women prisoners, however, had been released by His Highness' Royal Warrant in 1946 (after three years of jail life) even before the advent of popular government in Mysore.

But the greatest irony is that few in India outside Mysore know anything about Issur. It shall not long be so. Let the dawn of freedom see the light of these forgotten heroes.

## SATAPPA—THE BORN FIGHTER

*"And if then the tyrants dare  
Let them ride among you there,  
Slash, and Stab and maim and hew,  
What they like, that they do  
"With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay,  
Till their rage has died away"*

*Shelley*

**I**N THE HISTORY of the August Revolution in India, the district of Belgaum in the Bombay presidency stands in the first rank for sacrifice, and for political awakening among the masses. In Belgaum district, are found thousands of national workers who have given their lives to achieve the independence of India.

It was in Belgaum that Mahatma Gandhi presided over the Indian National Congress Session in 1924. The spirit of Belgaum has always been invincible. No amount of government shooting in 1942 would make the people halt their steps. For they had before them the lofty examples of selfless workers who gave their lives for the sake of freedom.

The governor of Bombay, while reviewing the August Movement in the province of Karnataka, had a lot to say about the Belgaum district. Quite unintentionally he paid a glowing tribute when he said, "It is a district notorious for its subversive activities." This compliment from the head of the government of Bombay is virtually a testimony to the daring of the people of Belgaum.

Kadvi Shivapur is a small village situated on the outskirts of Belgaum. Though tiny in size, for it has a population of only 1,500, the reputation of the village for national work is enviably great. The village played its full part in all the



struggles for freedom. First in 1905, next in 1929 and again in 1930, the people of this village showed their mettle. In the individual Civil Disobedience Movement of 1910, the village had the rare honour of sending a Sathyagrahi\* who was selected by Mahatma Gandhi himself.

In 1914, this village saw the birth of a robust young child who was named Satappa and who a score and odd years later grew to be one of the greatest Sathyagrahis of the land. His father was a simple, modest farmer, by name Brahmappa. He was a Jain by caste. The Jain philosophy had a decisive influence on the outlook on Satappa. He discovered that the only justification for life lay in service to his people and his country. Satappa in his younger days showed remarkable abilities, but as often happens, in our unfortunate land, there was none to encourage him.

Education is a rare commodity in the villages of India. With immense difficulty Satappa managed to learn the first two R's in his mother tongue, Kannada language, in an elementary school. But poor luck compelled him to discontinue his studies to aid his indigent father in his profession. Whatever work Satappa undertook, he did it to the satisfaction of his conscience, and whatever time was spared to him, he utilized it in the reconstruction of his village. He took great interest in the day to day Congress work. He was by profession an agriculturist, but Congress work had a greater hold on him.

He organized the first Taluk Conference and worked as a member of the Taluk Congress Committee. But he did not have a love of power—positions came to him unsolicited. Whenever the people of the Taluk wanted their grievances redressed they would look to Satappa, and he always delivered the goods. Thinking and acting always in terms of the country and not for a moment in terms of the first person singular, Satappa remained a bachelor. He used to remark that he had no time to think of matrimony.

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\*Sathyagrahi, means one who volunteers himself without anticipating any result, adhering to the principles of truth and non violence.

Satappa took part in the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement started by Gandhiji in 1940. He was twice sentenced and jailed, once for four months and again for nine months. On both occasions the Hindalagi jail in Belgaum was his abode. On the August 12, 1942, the village of Shivapur heard the edict of Mahatma Gandhi to his countrymen to break the shackles of slavery and become free. Satappa lost no time in organizing the village. Since he was the village leader, no one would oppose him. With his trusted co workers, he carried on the struggle tenaciously and without violence.

On the morning of the twelfth, the villagers assembled under the leadership of Satappa and declared their village independent. The village hall was taken over and the police head was asked to leave the place. A huge procession marched in the village. Congress flags were carried at the head of it. The village administration was taken over and placed in the hands of elected representatives. The village republic, reminiscent of those in Vedic India, was carried on systematically, ably and non violently for three days.

On August 15, a police force, under the guidance of the district police superintendent, made its way to the village. A procession of patriots, singing national songs, was going on at the time. The crowd consisted of about sixty or seventy people. The police force was of the same size. The district police superintendent ordered the processionists to disperse. Satappa in his firm voice said, 'Sahib, we are free, and we take no commands from you. You might have the strength to walk over us when dead, but you have lost your moral right to command us when alive.'

The district police superintendent, as is the wont of khaki clad gentry, threatened that he would rain bullets on them. But the threat produced no effect. The leader of the procession was undeterred and exhorted the processionists to continue. Some leading villagers were arrested on the spot. The police fired some shots. Satappa was standing in front, holding the tri colored flag high. The processionists did not dis-

perse even after the first skirmish. They were incensed. At this imperturbability, the police official fired straight at Satappa. The bullet hit him. With the national flag in his hand and with a cry of "Victory to Mother India" on his lips, Satappa fell to the ground, never to rise again. Blood began to flow in a stream from his body. He uttered his last words, "Please tell Mahatma Gandhi that I am embracing death with open arms at the altar of Mother India."

Mahatma Gandhi's edict, "Do or die" will reverberate as long as Indian Nationalism is alive. And here is an indomitable fighter, who both did and died. It is hence that Satappa, a son of whom Karnataka and India should be proud, deserves to be canonized.

Satappa is no more, but his work lives on in every patriotic particle of dust in that village. Immediately after the death of Satappa, the villagers lovingly erected a memorial mound and offered their homage to their dead hero. Even today a tri coloured flag is flying over the mound as a mark of respect to his departed soul. The mound has now become a sacred place. Every villager, young and old, pays his respect to this rural martyr.